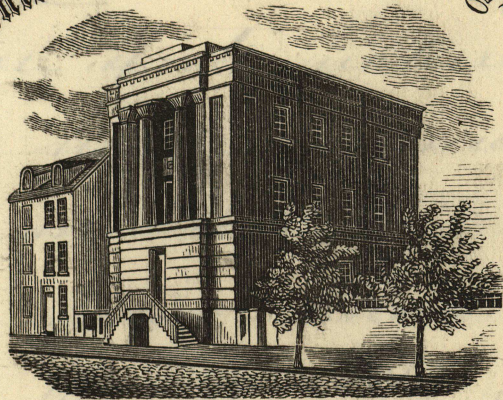


Etiology

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

of the

Homoeopathic Medical College of Pennsylvania



FOR

The Degree of Doctor of Medicine

BY

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To know the cause of
a disease is sometimes to be able
to cure, or often to prevent it.
In many cases the cause is beyond
our control, but to have a
knowledge of its nature, may
teach us how to remedy, or at
least to moderate it.

There are many diseases over which
medicine has very little control,
but when the causes of them are
fully ascertained, ^{they} may be avoided
or extinguished. The causes of disease
are everywhere present, both around
and within us. The things most
necessary to our existence, as the

air we breathe, the food and fluids which restore our daily loss of body, the very products of our industry, by which we are made more comfortable and happy, themselves give rise to the ills which the human family are heir to. The causes of disease being exceedingly numerous and varied, the necessity for a classification of them has constantly been experienced. They have been divided into two great classes, predisposing and exciting, these have been again divided into external and internal, the general and local, the principal and accessory, the positive and negative, mechanical and physiological, the proximate and

remote. Those causes which act according to the laws of chemistry and physics, we call physical and chemical causes. Among these causes there are those which are constantly followed, by the same diseases, ^{4/}for them we reserve the name 'determining'. Other causes whose action is uncertain and obscure, may be subdivided into two series. In the first we place whatever serves by gradually ^{bringing} modifying the economy, to prepare it for any particular affection, and every thing producing the disposition for being so affected. These are predisposing causes. We ~~shall~~ rank those in the second class, whose action is usually transient,

^{which} only quickens the development of
a disease, to which the patient was
predisposed. ^{At} to the last we give
the name 'exciting causes.'

I shall not undertake to enu-
merate all the known causes of
disease, for that would be an endless
task. I will notice many of the
sources of disease, with a view of
noticing those more particularly,
which extend their influence over
all. Ascertained causes of diseases
are as numerous as they are various.
The various articles of food that
^{superfluous} we eat, under certain circum-
stances become the cause of disease.
The atmosphere which is so necessary
to life, is full of dangers; it may

prove injurious, by its excessive pressure at great depths, or its lightness at great height, or it may prove hurtful by its impurity.

Clothing, including the covering at night, may be in excess, and may cause an undue amount of heat, ^{it may be} or deficient, and thus expose the body to still greater injury from cold. Our feelings and desires, many of our better impulses, when galled to or perverted, tend to our physical destruction. Exercise is necessary in order to preserve all the functions in their normal state, and a due amount of rest, is equally important to those which relate to the outer world.

Excess or deficiency, in either of these respects, may be the cause of many diseases. We have matters within the body entirely foreign to its organization, we have intestinal worms, and other parasitic animals, and intestinal biliary and urinary concretions.

There are certain derangements, which are particularly prominent, in the list of morbid causes. Such are mechanical obstructions, arising from stricture, compression of narrow passages, as the alimentary canal, excessive secretions, or hemorrhage, the passing of inflammation from one part to another. The number of agents, that are not necessarily related to the system in health, but act upon it

injuriously, are without number.

They may be divided into mechanical, chemical, and vital, or physiological causes. In the last class, must be ranked all kinds of stimulants that are not necessary to health, such as liquors, condiments, tea, coffee, tobacco, and opium.

There are different morbid agents, which are so diversified in their operation, or involve so much dissimilitude in relation to their source and nature, that there is no disease, under which they can be considered.

These are heat, cold, water, electricity, atmospheric impurities, light, contagion, and epidemic influence.

Heat to a certain extent is necessary,

to the healthy performance of all the functions. An elevated temperature when its operation is continued for any length of time, has a marked influence upon the liver, it is probably excited into inflammation, or sustains it in an excited state, so as to take on that condition, when exposed to the influence of any other cause. Considerable heat when applied for some time has a sedative, or depressing influence upon the animal functions, namely upon the nervous system, causing languor and indisposition to exertion, whether of body or mind. Heat is very apt to bring on profuse perspiration of the escaped

fluid, occasions an absolute reduction of temperature in the immediate parts, and thus protects the system generally. The effects of cold on the human body, as is well known, are in many respects the opposite of heat. The first impression of cold is to diminish the sensibility, circulation and secretion is checked, the superficial arteries become unable to transmit the blood in the usual quantity through the integuments. Hence the skin becomes pale and shrunken, clothes that were tight while the body is warm, become exceedingly loose when cold. The heart with the arterial system becomes weaker. It is evident that the

blood decreases in the superficial vessels, therefore it will increase the internal circulation. It is equally as certain that the nervous system of the surface is depressed, and it is highly probable that this is also concentrated in the internal organs. Excess of blood and nervous energy combined, must evidently cause disease. Water when used in excess, has a decided sedative influence on the system, it differs from cold that its depressing effects have no tendency to produce reaction. It appears to operate by increasing the distance between the living molecules, to destroy their vital cohesion, and

thus lessen the action of the part
and weaken its powers.

There is but little doubt, that
the free use of hot water is a
great cause of dyspepsia, by over
stimulation, or by impairing the
excitability of the system.

When taken largely into the stom-
ach, it does not only ^{the function of} impair the
organ, but interferes with the
process of digestion, by too largely
diluting the food.

Light, though so essential to our
well being, and all our dearest interest
in the world, does not appear to be
a very powerful cause of disease.

It has but little influence over
any of the organs of the body that we can

obscure, except the one specially formed for the reception of its impressions.

Light appears to effect our organic functions, the same as it does the vegetable kingdom, which are well known to lose their colour, when ^{they} grow in the dark.

Electricity is supposed to be a powerful agent in the generation of disease, through its wide diffusion, and its universal interference in the external operations, which are going on around us, and the many effects it produces on the system.

Atmospheric impurities are thought to be a powerful generator of disease, there are but few of the vapours known which render the air

impure, carbonic acid gas, and carbon-
dioxide, which are disengaged
by the combustion of charcoal, hydro-
sulphuric acid, sulphurous
acid, and carbonic oxide, are almost
all that arise from natural sources,
or artificial processes, in sufficient
quantities to affect health.

These gases may destroy life, in var-
ious ways, they may prove injurious
by excluding the pure air from the
lungs, and thus cause asphyxia, or by
entering the lungs and taking the
place of pure air, may by their irri-
tant properties, cause a spasm of the
glottis. Sulphuretted hydrogen is one
of the most violent poisons. It has
been known to destroy life, it matters

not in what way, it enters the system, whether by the stomach, the lungs, the skin, or rectum.

Miasmatic exhalation constitute another group of malarious causes, but the way or manner they produce disease, is not yet fully confirmed by Physics and Chemistry.

We only know that when animal or vegetable substances undergo decomposition, a principle is set free which diffuses itself in the atmosphere, and which possesses the power when absorbed into the system, of producing certain specific effects upon the system, which generate fever. It is supposed that they enter the circulation by absorption through

the air cells of the lungs; They may also be absorbed through the skin, or be taken into the stomach with the saliva, and be absorbed in that way.

As to their real nature we are entirely ignorant. There is a certain number of diseases, which may be transmitted from the affected individual.

to healthy persons who come in contact with them. A disease thus propagated, is said to be contagious.

Contagion is supposed to be the result of secretion, or exhalation, and may be mucus, pus, solid, or aeriform state. The contaminating effluvia is supposed to enter the blood through the skin, or perhaps the lungs.

Predisposing causes, although obscure

can often be explained satisfactorily.

The use of rich and nutritious food, which is followed by plethora, and the want of food and poor diet, which is frequently the cause of anaemia.

Temperament has a great deal to do with disease. There is scarcely a person so accurately organized, or so nicely balanced, as not to be liable to one disease more than another.

Hereditary tendency often predisposes us to certain diseases, we frequently see this illustrated in gout, consumption and physical deformities

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